



[Dedication of the ministri of the cult of Augustan Fortune \(CIL X, 824\) \[1\]](#)

The earliest known dedication of the attendants of the cult of Augustan Fortune in Pompeii.

Typology (Honorific / Funerary / etc.): Dedication

Original Location/Place: Within the cella of the temple.

Actual Location (Collection/Museum): Naples Archaeological Museum (inventory no. 3768)

Date: 3 CE

Physical Characteristics:

A small, marble statue base, inscribed on one side.

Material: Marble

Language: Latin

Category: Roman

Publications: *CIL X, 824 (ILS 6382)*

Commentary: This inscription commemorates the investiture of the first attendants, or *ministri*, of the imperial cult in Pompeii. The inscription was found on a statue base within the Temple of Fortuna Augusta, the earliest known temple to her cult. It is a text of some significance as it indicates the date from which the cult of *Fortuna Augusta* was organised by the local, public authorities when they instituted the first attendants, *ministri*, responsible for its organisation and administration (Andringa, "M. Tullius...", p. 101). This date is given by the naming in the inscription of the consuls, Publius Silius and Lucius Volusius Saturninus, and the *duumvirs*, the leaders of the town council, Marcus Staius Rufus and Gnaeus Melissaeus, who held their respective magistracies in 3 CE. From this date, four *ministri*, or attendants, were charged with the duties of maintaining and organising the activity of the cult - including offering sacrifices and erecting statues of new emperors - according to the law of their association. A further inscription found in the temple names a *lex Fortunae Augustae ministrorum* and discusses the dedication of two statue bases, rather than a statue, in accordance with the group's rules (*CIL X, 825*).

The *ministri* of the temple of Fortuna Augusta were, crucially, not priests of the imperial cult. They were 'ministers' or 'attendants', selected usually from the slave population of provincial towns, and usually from the households of the more elite families. Their role had emerged following Augustus' reorganisation of the compital cults, or neighbourhood shrines, in c. 7 BCE, as part of his renewal of the old cults and religious traditions that had been abandoned in the political - and, as he felt, moral - collapse of the late Republic (Gradel, *Emperor worship*, p. 117). Since 27 BCE when Augustus had formally returned the state, or *res publica* to the Senate and the people of Rome, much of the propaganda surrounding the new regime focused on the restoration of the religious values and behaviour that had characterised Rome's earliest years. New temples were built, older temples restored and cults, such as those of the *vici* (the different neighbourhoods that Rome was organised into, and which the provincial towns copied) were given new emphasis. In 7 BCE Augustus added his *genius*, or spirit, to the two *Lares* (gods) traditionally worshipped at the neighbourhood shrines, so that they now honoured the *Lares Augusti*, the Augustan Lares (Ovid, *Fasti* V.145-7; Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, p. 116-121). Four 'masters' (*magistri*) had traditionally managed the operation of these shrines, with the assistance of four *ministri*, to be selected from the slave population (for the organisation of the *magistri* and *ministri* see Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, p. 118-121 and Castrén, *Ordo populusque*, p. 72-73). The *ministri* of the Temple of Augustan Fortune in Pompeii should not be confused with these attendants from the neighbourhood shrines, although their role was certainly modelled on them. Their numbers varied from three to four, and the epigraphic evidence from Pompeii demonstrates that all were of servile origin (Castrén, *Ordo populusque*, p. 77).

The Temple of Fortuna Augusta appears to have been central to the activity and worship of the imperial cult in Pompeii, and the inclusion of slaves in visible positions of responsibility is an important facet of the success of the cult in provinces; far from the menial or 'dirty' jobs that many slaves were employed in, the role of the *ministri* ensured a certain social status, amongst their fellow slaves, their enfranchised colleagues and free society. The role also emphasised the social standing of the family or household from which the slaves had been selected. Paavo Castrén has demonstrated that of the slave owners named in the inscription - Vettius, Caesia Prima, Numitori and Lacutulanus - the first three named were all from families of some prestige in Pompeii. The Vettii are perhaps best known for the lavish House of the Vettii built by one of their freedmen in the later years of the town's history, but the family itself became prominent in the Julio-Claudian period, with the *duumvir* P. Vettius Celer. Several more candidates for the leadership of the town council are also attested in the Flavian period (Castrén,



Ordo populusque, p. 239-40). The Caesii too had one member of the family elected *duovir* in the early years of the colony established at Pompeii, and has been suggested as the magistrate responsible for the construction of the Forum Baths (Castrén, *Ordo populusque*, p. 88 and p. 146, n. 85). The Numitorii were the most successful, with two *aediles* and a *duovir* attested in the epigraphic evidence from Pompeii, but they are also well-known from inscriptions in Rome, which reveal them to be an old plebeian *gens* that had derived their *gentilicium*, or family name, from the Alban King Numitor. Paavo Castrén has speculated that the Numitorii present in Pompeii were probably colonists sent by Rome following Sulla's victory in 89 BCE, or descendents of these early arrivals (Castrén, *Ordo populusque*, p. 198, n. 281). Only the Lacutulani are not attested in the election notices and magisterial dedications from Pompeii, although they are well known from the fellow Sabine settlement of Amiternum (Castrén, *Ordo populusque*, p. 180, n. 208). These families therefore represent some of the most successful in Pompeii, and certainly those most active in local politics; the investiture of their slaves as *ministri* in the Temple of Fortuna Augusta was a further extension of their influence and power, and a demonstration of the dedication of the entire household in the celebration of the imperial cult.

However, the inscription - and many similar texts also excavated from the Temple - is careful to make a clear distinction about the servile status of the *ministri*. This was important for the legitimacy of the cult, which relied on the support of individuals not only to spread its popularity, but also to ensure that it did not threaten the long-established religious norms of Rome. The worship of a living ruler, although a visible facet of life in the Greek East of the Hellenistic period, was not permissible by Roman law or custom. Augustus had limited his cult to the association of his person with other gods, such as the *Lares*, and encouraged the adoration of his *genius* (Zanker, *Pompeii*, p. 81). The Temple of Augustan Fortune had been built on private land with private funds, and although subject to the approval of the town council, the *ministri* operated independently from it, subject to its own laws and regulations, and their activities funded independently by the 'ministers' themselves. The administration of a cult specific to the emperor was, therefore, separate from the public organisation of 'state' religion, such as at the Capitulum or the Temple of Venus, which in turn emphasised its very local and 'popular' nature (Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, p. 129). Although the imperial cult was received enthusiastically across Italy, and indeed the rest of the empire, in its earliest days these seemingly small points of distinction were important for ensuring that it could be instituted in a way that was not subversive, which may also explain why it took until 3 CE for the *ministri* of the temple to be formally appointed in Pompeii. Their investiture represents an important moment for Pompeii; the cult of *Fortuna Augusta* was a local one, created especially for the town and initiated by one of its most successful citizens. The creation of proper 'roles' within the cult, that corresponded with similar offices in the capital city gave the cult legitimacy, and the establishment of a temple on private land brought the public and private spheres of religious activity closer, without compromising the traditional customs that Augustus was in the process of renewing. As William van Andringa has commented, the Temple of Fortuna Augusta and its *ministri* ensured that the inhabitants of Pompeii now identified *with* the state, rather than simply working for it (Andringa, "M. Tullius...", p. 112).

Keywords in the original language:

- [minister](#) [2]
- [Fortuna Augusta](#) [3]
- [duumvir](#) [4]
- [consul](#) [5]

Thematic keywords:

- [imperial cult](#) [6]
- [Augustan Fortune](#) [7]
- [imperial piety](#) [8]
- [Rome \(city\)](#) [9]
- [Pompeii](#) [10]
- [temple](#) [11]
- [statue](#) [12]
- [piety](#) [13]
- [emperor](#) [14]
- [slave](#) [15]
- [freedman](#) [16]



Bibliographical references: Andringa, van William, "[“M. Tullius...aedem Fortunae August\(ae\) solo et peq\(unia\) sua’: Private foundation and Public Cult in a Roman colony”](#) [17], in *Public and Private in Ancient Mediterranean Law and Religion* (ed. C. Ando, J. Rüpke ; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), p. 99-113
Castrén, Paavo, [Ordo Populusque Pompeianus. Polity and Society in Roman Pompeii](#). [18] (Roma: Bardi Editore, 1975)
Cooley, Alison E., [Pompeii and Herculaneum. A Sourcebook](#). [19] (London; New York: Routledge, 2004)
Gradel, Ittai, [Emperor Worship and Roman Religion](#) [20] (Oxford Classical Monographs; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002)
Zanker, Paul, [Pompeii. Public and Private Life](#) [21] (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998)
Other sources connected with this document: Inscription

[Dedication of the Temple of Fortuna Augusta \(CIL X, 820\) \[22\]](#)

The dedication of the Temple of Augustan Fortune in the Forum of Pompeii.

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